



ENDOSCOPY CLINIC INFORMATION

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Guide To Understanding Irritable Bowel Syndrome

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

IBS is a disturbance of the intestinal tract. Its symptoms include abdominal pain, bloating and abnormal bowel movements. Diarrhea may often alternate with constipation, while pain and bloating may be relieved by a bowel movement. Nerve endings in the bowel are unusually sensitive, so that normal bowel events, such as passing fluid or gas, cause abnormal muscle reactions.

What causes IBS?

IBS is known as a functional disorder. There is no direct cause of the syndrome. Symptoms appear to be caused by spasm of your bowel muscles. This results from increased sensitivity within the bowel to almost anything: eating, stress, emotional arousal or gaseous distention.

Will IBS impact my life?

People who have IBS often say they felt like their life revolved around the bathroom because of their alternating constipation and diarrhea. However, with some simple lifestyle changes, those same people say that their lives are back to normal.

How do I treat IBS?

First, evaluate your eating habits and levels of stress. Try to increase dietary fiber and avoid foods that trigger your symptoms. Also, remember to drink at least 8 glasses of fluid per day. Avoid or develop coping mechanisms for stress. Stress may be triggered by overwork, poor sleep habits or personal difficulties. Proper rest and exercise can help reduce stress levels and help with IBS.

How can a diet change help me?

Changing diets will help many people with IBS, but it varies from person to person. Avoid caffeine, nicotine and/or alcohol and foods such as dietary fats as these are common triggers of your symptoms. However, any food can trigger your IBS symptoms. Learning what is right, and wrong, for you is the best way to minimize the effects of IBS and maximize the benefit of your diet. Generally, adding bran or another natural source of fiber, like the psyllium in Metamucil, can help to relieve the constipation associated with IBS.

Am I alone?

No, in fact the symptoms of IBS occur in 10-20% of adults. Its symptoms are the second most common cause of workplace absenteeism, after the common cold.

Is IBS forever?

Not necessarily. It has been established that 10% of IBS sufferers get better each year. Of course, this will be affected by your lifestyle and stress levels but you have the ability to control these factors and control the symptoms if IBS.